

# STTC Newsletter - January 2023

Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio, South Sudan



## Welcome Pope Francis

Pope Francis makes a historical visit to South Sudan from 3 to 5 February 2023 along with world Protestant leaders, Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury and Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the Church of Scotland. Political leaders and the people of South Sudan in particular are optimistic about the outcome of this 'ecumenical pilgrimage of peace'. To mark the occasion STTC will organise peace-building sessions among students who come from different tribes, states and religions. Furahi Penina, one of the STTC students say, *"What I expect from the visit of the Pope and the other church leaders is that they pray for our country so that we will be able to have the peace that we have been longing for a long time, and also advise our people and leaders to do good things. We want to live together in harmony and peace."* Santino Maduk, another student says, *"There is no peace in the country. I hope and pray that the words of the Holy Father touch the hearts of the people and those words be reflected in their action."* It is clear that everyone longs for lasting peace and development in this youngest nation in the world.



## Female Students outnumber Male

STTC welcomes forty-one new students from different parts of South Sudan and Nuba Mountains. For the first time in the history of the college, female students have outnumbered the male students in the new admission: 22 female and 19 male students. Thanks to Mr Kirya Julius, the recruitment officer, who travels to all the states and dioceses and conducts the admission process with diligence. These young women and men with a passion for teaching are ready to commit full-time to professional learning and school teaching practice for the next two years. STTC offers a completely free and quality education along with full board and lodging. Thanks to all the major donors and religious congregations for their support. STTC continues to promote girls' education for the benefit of the country. One more religious sister from Uganda, in addition to the existing two young sisters, has joined STTC as a student this semester.



## Welcome Mr Kuay Gattot

Solidarity welcomes Mr Kuay Gattot to be on the teaching faculty. Mr Kuay, from Mayom county, Bentiu, Unity State, completed his two years Certificate in Primary School Education in 2017 at STTC. He was selected for Solidarity scholarships to do his Bachelor's Degree in English Literature with Education at Tangaza University, Nairobi, Kenya. Mr Kuay proudly says that he is the first university graduate in his family of 26 siblings. He says, *"I am indebted to Solidarity and extremely happy to serve my society by teaching in the same college which gave me new life."* STTC is proud to welcome Mr Kuay to join the faculty, and wishes him success in his new career.

## Mode 2: Year-1Sem-1 Exams

The first group of students to undertake the Certificate programme through Mode 2 (Friday/Saturday and some school vacation days) commenced exams on 28 January 2023. This is their first experience of STTC end-of-semester exams which are conducted with rigour; the first session is always something of an ordeal but students then settle down. The strictness of the assessment system at STTC is a major strength of the college. In student feedback, this is always mentioned. We try for tough but fair papers that are criterion-referenced, with double marking and exam numbers (not names). There is zero-tolerance for cheating and favouritism by teaching staffs as the 'old' students impress on the newcomers. In a country with a fragile examination system, this alone makes STTC special.



## Fr Jim Greene's visit

Fr Jim Greene, the Executive Director of Solidarity with South Sudan who is residing at Juba, paid a visit to the college. His visit always brings encouragement and new energy to the college. In his meetings with the Solidarity members, he discussed matters concerning administration, new development, strategic plan, financial management, academic affairs, and student welfare. He emphasized that the immediate task of STTC is to restart the Inservice Programme. The aim is to expand to all the dioceses and offer training to those teachers already in the schools but who have not yet had the opportunity to reach Qualified Teacher Status. During his interaction with the students Fr Jim was happy to see the presence of more female students in the college. He mentioned that the students need to help the college to become self-sustainable as it might not be viable to continue to offer free education forever.

## Sr Maria Elisabete's session

A short stay in Nzara enabled Sister Maria Elisabete Lourenco, Comboni Sisters, to meet with all STTC student groups over two days in January. This Pax Christi workshop on active non-violence and peace-building fits exactly with the mission of STTC. It also fits with the National Curriculum for South Sudan where peace, peace-making and peace education are named repeatedly. Peace education is a 'cross-cutting issue' to be applied across all subjects from Primary 1 to Senior 4, while it is also a separate strand within Social Studies. For personal and professional development, and as training in community leadership, Sr Elisabete's contribution was invaluable. Student feedback was direct: 'the workshop was a privilege'.





## Textbook Printing

The creation and printing of original textbooks for the teacher-training programmes at STTC is an ongoing project. Special thanks to Sr Jacinta Prunty, our Director for Academic Affairs, and to her collaborators, for magnificent work in preparing the first trial edition. STTC has gone ahead, with the full approval and active support of the Ministry of Education and General Instruction, to create what is the first-ever series of teacher-training textbooks to match the National Curriculum South Sudan and the Ministry's own Initial Teacher Training Syllabus and Guidance. The list of Solidarity textbooks (first edition) for the Certificate is as follows. For Professional Studies there is one book each for Supporting the Learner; Behaviour and Classroom Management; The Role of the Teacher; Language and Literacy. There is a handbook for School Practice. For Subject Knowledge, there are ITT textbooks for English, Mathematics, Science, Christian Religious Education, Social Studies, Physical Education and Health. A separate book for Creative Arts and Music is planned. Thanks to Sr Joan Mumaw and the FSC Foundation, USA, for its support to print the textbooks.



## Student Leadership Team

STTC always gives priority to training in leadership skills. The student teachers take the lead role in organising the life of the campus around areas such as catering, cleaning, gardening, cultural & sports activities, maintenance & repairs, scout, health & hygiene, etc. In order to continue to maintain the smooth running of the campus an election for the new student president and the leadership team was held. It was conducted in a democratic and good humoured but serious manner. Mr Kumbo Moses (since this time it is the turn of a male student to hold the office) was elected as the new student president and Ms Muhuyi Stancelous as the vice president. Their leadership team has promised to work for peace and unity and the overall welfare of the college.



## Outreach Programme

In addition to training teachers, the main ministry on the campus, STTC undertook a special outreach programme last summer to offer basic computer skills to primary school children from the neighbourhood. It was a great success. About eighty children benefited from the first short-term course. In the current semester an advanced course in computer for the young adults and spoken English Course for the young women and mothers at home have been started. There is a big demand for the program. Young mothers show great interest to learn English and they even come with their babies. Groups of our student teachers have to take turns to do the job of babysitting. Thanks to Sr Margaret Sheehan, who is gifted in teaching English language to the beginners, and to Sr Shu Fang whose computer skills are in constant demand. Through this programme the college shares its resources and knowledge with the children and adults of the neighbourhood.



## Honourable Tor Deng and Ministry donation



On New Year's Day, the Honourable Augustino Tor Deng Mawie, a veteran of South Sudan's struggle for independence (SPLM party) visited the college. He was accompanied by Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro, the Hon. Thabo A. Ajang (National Election Commission), and other dignitaries. Hon. Tor Deng followed up his visit a few days later with a cash donation of almost one million South Sudan Pound to the college (970,000 ssp), an impressive sum both in value and in bulk. Tor Deng is a former governor of Warrap State and Commissioner for Peace and Reconciliation. He knew already of Nuba students at STTC but was delighted to discover an even greater mix, from all the states, living in harmony here. He had the rapt attention of all his young listeners as he spoke at length on their crucial role as teachers in making a future for South Sudan. He carried away some souvenirs from the Department of Creative Arts to give the President, H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, when he reports on his visit to STTC.

## Farewell to Br Bill Colford

Br Bill Colford, of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and a native of Canada, has been a valued friend of STTC for many years. Recalled to his home province after more than 20 years in Africa, STTC community bid him farewell on behalf of all those he has served so generously over the past two decades. Bill lived in the Christian Brothers' community in Yambio and was attached to the Star project but he was ever ready to help out at STTC, covering classes while a new tutor was en route, or another tutor was absent. Many Saturdays he gave time to the Open University students (Early Childhood). His wisdom, cheerful company and zest for life will be much missed on Sundays in STTC. We wish him health and happiness in his new mission.



## Day for Consecrated Life

Because of the Pope's forthcoming visit to South Sudan, the day for Consecrated Life was celebrated early in the diocese of Tombara-Yambio by RSASS (the association of Religious in South Sudan) and hosted by the STTC community (brought forward from 2 Feb). While some RSASS members were already on their way to Juba or otherwise engaged, the STTC community, representing 7 congregations from six countries, brothers and sisters, along with our three student sisters (3 more congregations), makes for a good start. We welcomed brothers and sisters from Yambio itself, Nzara, Riimenze and further afield for a special Eucharist, sharing and meal. This is a real exercise in solidarity with religious from across the diocese and a chance to deepen the commitment made on profession of vows.

